

10. Maintain Capitol Lake with fewer than 100 resident Canada geese. *[For additional information regarding this objective, refer to pages 10-1 to 10-9 in the Capitol Lake Adaptive Management Plan - 1999 to 2001 (1999).]*

BACKGROUND

Beginning in 1999 GA undertook the effort to eliminate human-geese conflicts in Heritage and Marathon Parks. Both parks were overrun with these waterfowl, which severely limited their use by the public. In 1999 GA initiated a Canada goose harassment program which is now an ongoing part of their management of Capitol Lake. Harassment techniques include the selective use of pyrotechnics and water soluble paintballs to frighten the birds. The department experimented with dogs to harass the geese, but this effort was discontinued. Signage for people to not feed the geese was added around the lake. Temporary fencing along the shoreline of Marathon Park helped keep the geese out of that area and allowed the grass to recover.

Between 1998 and 1999 the local resident goose population increased from 1,900 to 2,600 based upon the Audubon Christmas bird count. This represented an uncontrolled population growth of 21 percent, and exceeded the Seattle area goose population count. In 1999 GA began to contract with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to help manage the geese on Capitol Lake. Their responsibilities included continuing to addle eggs in the nests around the lake, and to remove geese from Capitol Lake during the bird's "molt" of their flying feathers between May and July. The USDA removed 486 geese from the basin in 2000 and another 393 geese in 2001.

The resident Canada goose population for the entire county has been targeted at 750 birds by the USDA and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. The target year-end population for Capitol Lake is 100 or fewer birds. In 1999, a total of 1,875 birds were counted during the molt goose count. In 2000, 1,560 birds were counted and in 2001 the total was 1,340 birds. Although not meeting the countywide target, the numbers are encouraging for long-term population management. The graph on the following page compares Thurston County's Christmas bird count with the molt bird count from the last three years.



Geese and other waterfowl along Percival Cove, c. Summer, 1998. Courtesy of Thurston County Water and Waste Management Department.

Activities in Years 2003 - 2005:

GA plans to continue to work with others to manage geese on Capitol Lake. Staff will continue to support the Interlocal Waterfowl Management Committee and the summer molt bird count. GA will also continue to contract with USDA to “round up” and dispose of the excess geese. It is the goal of GA to keep the geese, as much as possible, away from the developed park and recreational areas and facilities on the lake.

CLAMP Budget 2003 - 2005:

GA, the City of Tumwater and the Port of Olympia together expend about \$45,000 annually to manage geese in the Capital Lake basin.

Activities in Years 2005 - 2013:

GA will modify its management practices based upon the summer bird count, changing conditions and recommendations from the Interlocal Waterfowl Management Committee.

CLAMP Budget 2005 - 2013:

The projected cost to General Administration to manage Canada geese will be \$45,000 per biennium. Additional costs of \$5,000 to \$15,000 per year will be incurred by local governments until the target population is reached.

